III.—CALLING ATTENTION TO THE SUDDEN AND STEEP FALL IN THE PRICE OF POTATOES GROWN IN THE NILGIRIS DISTRICT.

SRI V. M. SURENDRA RAM : Mr. Chairman, Sir, under rule 41 of the Council Rules, I wish to call the attention of the Hon. the Minister for Home, to a matter of urgent public importance, viz., the recent sudden and steep fall in the prices of potatoes grown in the Nilgiris district and the consequent accumulation of heavy stocks in the hands of the growers which affects adversely the production of potatoes.

* THE HON. SRI M. BHAKTAVATSALAM : Sir, I would like to make the following statement with reference to this " calling attention " notice.

The reasons attributed for the recent steep fall in prices of potatoes grown in the Nilgiris district and the accumulation of stocks, are as follows :—

(1) Large arrivals in the market from the harvested produce.

(2) Bombay, Calcutta, and even some less important North Indian towns provide the main market for the Nilgiris potatoes. Of late, increased facilities are available for cold storage warehouses at Calcutta and in other important places in North India. Fresh potatoes will not generally be available in North India during the months of June, July and August and there used to be large-scale export from the Nilgiris district to those places during these months. But now, due to better cold storage facilities, the potatoes grown and harvested in North India prior to this period and preserved as a result, are finding a better market in Calcutta, they being cheaper than potatoes from the Nilgiris. It is reported that the demand from Calcutta and other places in North India has gone down considerably this year and in recent months. Bombay too is now getting larger quantities of potatoes from Assam and Mysore States. Mysore has of late taken to increased production of potatoes, and Mysore potatoes are finding an easy market in Bombay with the result that the demand for the Nilgiris potatoes has gone down.

(3) Outside India, Ceylon is the chief market for the Nilgiris potatoes. The quality of the last crop was, however, not good enough for export to Ceylon.

(4) The Railway imposed a restriction on the booking of perishables in July in view of the strike of the Central Government employees. Though the restriction has been removed, there is still some restriction of the booking of goods to North Indian Railway. This was an immediate contributory factor for the sudden slump this year. The position is, however, expected to change for the better shortly.